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OBEY SAYS HEALTH BILL MUST PROTECT MEDICARE BENEFITS AND END INSURANCE COMPANY GAMES

HAYWARD, WI – Seventh District Congressman Dave Obey (D-WI) warned at a lunch with local citizens today in Hayward that the Senate health-care reform bill of Senator Max Baucus (D-MT) does not do enough to make health insurance more affordable for people of modest incomes.

“You don’t do anyone any favors, if you require people to buy insurance coverage but make it unaffordable for them to do so,” Obey said.

Obey told the crowd that to protect Medicare the health care bill needs to:

- Protect current Medicare benefits;
- Ensure that seniors maintain access to their doctors and are not interfered with by insurance companies;
- Substantially slow down the steady rise in out-of-pocket expenses;
- Protect seniors from being discriminated against in health insurance policies because of illness or age;
- Improve quality of care and enhance prevention by ensuring there will be no co-payment requirements for preventive care;
- Make substantial progress on closing the Medicare Part D donut hole – a costly gap in prescription drug coverage.

“The glaring weakness in the Baucus bill in the Senate, as it stands currently, is that it makes health insurance unaffordable to too many people of modest incomes,” said Obey. “It must make health insurance more affordable and more secure for both persons with insurance coverage and for those of modest incomes without health insurance coverage.”

“When I talk to constituents they tell me they are tired of insurance company games,” said Obey.

“The insurance companies use gimmicks like pre-existing conditions to deny coverage, cancel

policies at renewal time because of expensive treatments for serious illnesses like cancer, charge small businesses an arm and a leg compared to what they charge big companies for the same coverage, and steadily increase the co-payments and other out-of-pocket expenses every year. We need to end the 'job lock' caused when workers want a new job, but won't make the move to that new job, worried that a sick child's illness won't be covered by the new employer's health insurance plan," said Obey.

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